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We Came and We Brought Our Own Furniture

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WE CAME AND WE BROUGHT OUR OWN FURNITURE

A Thesis Presented

by

LUKE BLOOMFIELD

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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English

WE CAME AND WE BROUGHT OUR OWN FURNITURE

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ABSTRACT

WE CAME AND WE BROUGHT OUR OWN FURNITURE

MAY 2011

LUKE BLOOMFIELD, M.F.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor James Tate

We Came and We Brought Our Own Furniture is a collection of poetry that represents the accumulation of four year's writing in Amherst and Northampton, Massachusetts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
1.	
SHANGHAI, 1925.....	3
THE ONYX ON THE FLORIST'S LIPS	4
SOMETIMES I AM INTRIGUED BY A BIG MYSTERY	5
THE PRESIDENT'S FACILITY	7
THE CATACOMB.....	8
THE WORLD WILL TELL YOU ABOUT ITS STILLNESS.....	9
THE COMMODORE	10
<i>SQUASH!</i>	11
I CAN BE BRUTISH TOO.....	12
LAMPPOST.....	13
OLD MAN HANDS.....	14
POEM	15
ON MY 27 TH BIRTHDAY	18
HERE COMES YOUR MAN	19

2.

HAVE SOME CAKE 21

FISTICUFFS..... 22

WHEN I GO 2 PARIS 23

THE AFFAIR I HAD WITH SWEDEN..... 24

LARGE HOPE FOR WATER 25

DER SPIEGEL 27

TURKEY 27

HAMMOCK..... 29

THE FARM HOUSE..... 30

IN THE MIDDLE OF A DELTA A FERRY TRAVELS..... 32

THE SON OF JOHNS..... 32

PIRATE RETALIATION 33

SOMETHING SMALL AND PRECIOUS 34

TODAY I AM FEELING RADICAL ABOUT HYPOTHETICAL THINGS WHICH
EXIST IN A PARENTHETICAL WAY 35

THE DUFFEL BAG 36

3.

THOUGHTS ON HANDS..... 40

PORNO ACID 45

I SWITCHED THE MOON WITH HAM.....	45
THE OTHER INTELLIGENTSIA	46
DEER.....	48
POEM	49

Dear Mom, I didn't see this but I will tell you about my train trip. I sat with Debbie til N.H. When she got off I sat with a man then a lady. I had chicken sandwiches, ice cream, milk, and peppermint patties.

-A. in a letter to his mother

1.

SHANGHAI, 1925

Lost in the woods, third time this week.

Fell asleep and woke to a square shaped
women nudging me with a shovel.

I stood up and brushed the leaves and mud
from my suit. She let go of her shovel
and shoved a shoe in my pocket.

I began to shiver and she laid the back of her
hand on my cheek.

THE ONYXON THE FLORIST'S LIPS

The onyx on the florist's lips was like a pinhole you look through to the end of a hallway.

I had just started seeing again.

When I left she ran after me, dragging her bad leg.

You forgot these, she said

handing me a bunch of ferns.

This is all wrong, I said.

I put a fern in my mouth, then another, then another,
until the roof blew off the building.

We were frozen

and the janitor rolled his bucket

through the dahlias,

the florist in the act of biting her lips,

me trying to hide something awful.

SOMETIMES I AM INTRIGUED BY A BIG MYSTERY

Sometimes I am intrigued by a big mystery
and sometimes a big mystery is precisely
what I am too scared to let intrigue me.

Sometimes, we are not doing anything
and I wonder why
we are not making love
on a public beach.

I want to make love to you
on a life raft somewhere in the Indian Ocean
and at the exact moment of you coming
a fishing boat
comes to our rescue.

Your arching body like a curled stack of magazines
held together by a rubber band.

My body like a rubber band
wound around a tightly wound
ball of rubber bands.

Laid out on the rug
like a twitching puppy,
you don't hear me say

I want to make love to you
on a bed of birds
and at the exact moment of you coming
the birds escape and fly as one
through the uprights and out of the stadium
and we are just floating where the bed once was.

I want to make love to you
in a castle while a coronation is taking place in another room.
Under a celestial ceiling of neon lights

I want to make love to you
for the three hundredth time
while your collection of glass elephants rattle
as though coming to life specifically to observe us
and return to their kind with reports of our ways.
When you awake covered in cat hair
I am mumbling about wanting to get mysterious with you
and you say, that phrase is opposite to what works.

THE PRESIDENT'S FACILITY

The eagle waited long enough
for people to employ their cameras.
Then it lifted from the apex of the port-o-john
in a gesture of such natural beauty
that it caused an epileptic to seizure.
Moments later, the bright yellow door swung open
and the president stepped from within.
He waved his arm either to say
As your president I approve of this facility, or
Stop! you must not enter here.
But he was smiling like a man who accomplishes
everything he sets his mind to,
and so we deliriously cheered
until the bulldozer asked us to leave.
Across the street a wedding emptied out of a crypt.
The bride's cobweb train dragged through the sticks and
animal bones left strewn by the Satanists.

THE CATACOMB

Gladys was married to Uncle Charlie and was building a boat. They had a child who was long gone. Uncle Charlie was like a warm snowman in those times. He had bones of gold and his ribs rattled like a goat in the breeze. He would become a puddle when he was tired. Ducks took to him naturally. When the boat Gladys built was complete, she put Uncle Charlie in it and said find our child. Uncle Charlie was gone for several years. When he returned with a pile of bones, Gladys had already eased into the catacomb.

THE WORLD WILL TELL YOU ABOUT ITS STILLNESS

I like movie theaters.

You need a new pair of sunglasses,
a different color to see me through.

The woman with one eye winks at me.

Straight guys fantasize about beautiful men
through the lens of the NBA.

In my dream a lonely trumpeter
serenaded your ship shaped-like-a-hamburger
you were sailing on somewhere far away.

The carriage you were borne away in is burning.

In another context, one where the ugliest
white pigeon pecks a scab on your forehead,
and the broken chair and the secret yellow dress
mean something else, I have discovered
the satisfaction of playing a ukulele in the pool
and chicken wings in a ziplock bag.

God litters too. All these bodies washing up and strewn
across town as though life were Tetris.

We're just shapes filled with liquid.

Meanwhile, one more horror in the park inside a plastic bag.

Meanwhile, socialized animals flashing skin
on eternal pedestrian walkways.

You like to see life populated with complications.

I like movie theaters.

THE COMMODORE

A hand sticks through.

Then a whole body
squeezes through the doors
like a spelunker
discovering a new chamber.

Gully mi Herrero leaps up, looks around,
adjusts his tuxedo, sits back down.

We're cautioned about frotteurs.

Gully quickly incants his life story,
weaving in and out of truth
like a samurai sword in a shogun's ribcage.

I pull out my bag of peppermint patties
and just sit there with the bag
invitingly open on my lap.

SQUASH!

The clouds look like squash
with knives slicing through them.
There are mostly squirrels in these woods
but you might find an old squash
buried in the leaves
where I threw it last week.
I used to put knives in my mouth
and let the tension build
between my mother and me.
I am going to hurl this squash
at the first squirrel that looks at me.
Squashing anything into anything
can be painful, particularly when the former
is a squash and the latter is an asshole.
When the moment to squash comes
I will not know what to do.
If I could throw a knife straight
there would not be any less holes in this barn.

I CAN BE BRUTISH TOO

Number one rule,
never do what people tell you.
My cousin married
into a family of minxes
and I am lost again
in these same woods I grew up in.
Across the clearing the doctor's wife
gets sumptuously pleased
by a wood elf's pet cephalopod.

LAMPPOST

Weekends provoke
fragile dispositions.
One owl tattoo too many
and even the pineapple
looks indelibly fucked up.
I am lost in a state of
compulsive crotch grabbing.
My cheek and eye socket sting
from slapping myself awake.
It is hard to act human when
being human is an act.
Glasses that magnify eyes.
A hundred years of lampposts in a hooker's armoire.
I stop off at the old museum of city reliquaries.
I push all the buttons
there are to push and place a fake name in the guest book.
Football is on the most unexpected lips.
Sounds of animal abuse
emanate from the walls and floor.
People do not ask me for cigarettes often.
Fragments of past obsessions
collect like a wet sock
stuffed into my mouth.
I am staring at a real honest to
god chicken sandwich
that is refusing to stare back.

OLD MAN HANDS

When you come to the old man hands
they are half buried beneath the moldy leaves
beneath the hill.

A white bone knuckle
looks like a bone white pebble.
Fingers wave like a sleepy bee or toy snake.

When you come to the old man hands
they are the same old man hands
but they aren't.

They are older and you are older.

The old man hands lose their seeds.

Crows in the trees drop down
and chip their beaks on the knuckles.

An old man climbs from the space
between a zipper.

He's come for his hands but he's too late.

They're thousands of precious little feathers
that blow into his beard.

The old man sticks his stumps
into his pockets, sighs.

POEM

Try as you might to resist,
you take a picture of the panini eating people.

I buy us expensive sandwiches in plastic
clam shells at the airport kiosk

and when I return to our table
you point to the couple

from the bus station the day before
eating their paninis.

How can you tell a panini from a regular sandwich
on baguette bread at a great distance?

On the plane we argue about
the mile high club, if you can be in it

for getting a blow job
and if it had to happen in the restroom.

An economy blow job is still a blow job, you say.
In business class, I say, a full fuck is complementary.

We ponder business class, if they really have zillion threadcount sheets
of fine Egyptian cotton—to do the business on, I say into the cabin silence.

And even though you knew it was coming,
you have clearly already decided to ignore me.

Later when the lights are dimmed
I turn to you and whisper

if I lost my legs in a plane crash
and had to wear metal legs

I could wear shorts in the winter
and not feel anything.

You pat my leg and say,
you would be dead in a plane crash.

Then you turn toward the window and pretend to sleep,
but I know you are just looking at the great Atlantic nothingness.

ON MY LAST TRIP TO THE BARBER

On my last trip to the barber,
when the shaving was complete,
and I stepped outside,
blinking talcum from my nostrils
and breathing musk through my eyes,
a thick darkness had come
and in this darkness shapes,
shivering, naked shapes, whispered my name,
and I too began to shiver and sweat, and
my clothes began to smolder like coals,
and it was all I could do
to take them off
and join the shapes, their collective
fog of thought settling upon me,

while a cold fiery tingle
was all that there was of me.

ON MY 27TH BIRTHDAY

Great Minds think of concepts
and Weak Minds think of people
is what he said out of his mouth
shaped like a dead eel.

I was thinking about throwing
all my money into a bathhouse
venture. In another part of the
party you were getting tangled
in someone's string theory.

A cake was knocked over like
a game of dominoes where there
is only one domino and it is a cake.

Emotions don't happen in a flash
is what has taken 27 years for me to learn.

On my next birthday I will be in China
and you will still be wearing lipstick
in graduate school.

HERE COMES YOUR MAN

A salted sunflower seed
slips into a patch of vomit.
Someone passes me
a bag of Doritos in the dark.
My head thumps arrhythmically
against the wall.
I call this trying to sleep on the go.
While I sleep the wall promises
it will taste like a wall if I lick it.
The wall is the only thing
between myself and a blank place.
But that doesn't stop me.
You have to be the crazier one
or they'll stop trusting you.
The aftertaste of creamed corn
lingers in my mouth the way
cannery spunk will if you eat it enough.
In the morning I am constantly deviating
because it feels safe.
Someone just said that, but I don't know
who.

2.

HAVE SOME CAKE

I had a spooky thought
about you eating cake
under a bridge
during twilight
and it had just stopped
raining so
everything
was a type of gray
like old cars in junkyards
and someone
we don't know
was lowering their shoes
into a hole for a reason
we don't know and
someone else
came along
and smacked the cake
out of your mouth.

FISTICUFFS

Who licked all the envelopes?

In 17 years I have never seen so many wasted envelopes. One could say this is the result of formal education. One could say one is asserting one's right to better functioning systems.

But this is not a lesson in brutality.

This is a variation on what everyone believes, parallel to what everyone thinks.

No one foresaw the barista dispute preceding quality coffee, so when it did and we had all clinked our coffee many times at sunrise, it was with an enormous bee in each of our hearts and one tiny shared heart for all the bees.

WHEN I GO 2 PARIS

When I go to Paris
it is like Paris.
Notre Damn feels like *there it is*.
Quiche
is in the context
of Quiche
but I am a nihilist, so.
I say *saucisson* like I mean it every time.
The postcards I send
say I am horny
and in great shape.
Voila, Paris, France!
All the cigarettes everywhere
are pronounced *cigarettes*
and the s is silently
punishing a schoolboy.
Paris is a red ball.
Trains strike all the time.
When I blow smoke
from my nose and mouth
a little socialist
with a fierce resolve
to improve the lives
of others jumps out.
But I am in Sweden,
in a dark part of eternity,
building a tent out of tent parts.

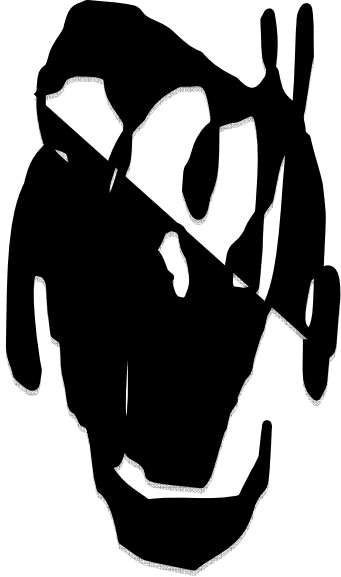
THE AFFAIR I HAD WITH SWEDEN

The affair I had with Sweden
was a sad little thing gone crazy,
like a girl, like a boy
like a voice in the dark asking anyone there?
Everyone cries on the telephone
except Sweden.
Why aren't you crying? I cried.
And Sweden would be silent
and patient and
as time passed I began to see
this was its way of saying
you are not right for me
and it sent me over the edge.
I don't leave the kitchen ever.
All day I hack food into Swedish shapes.
And you know what else I do.

LARGE HOPE FOR WATER

While the grownups
grilled sausages
I hit sticks with sticks.
This started my career as a killer.
You were wondering where I was all those years.
I was killing people.
For example: Howard
much admired patent clerk.
I killed Norris Floyd
and relived a previous killing.
Henrique Shushufindi
never existed and died
slowly without complaint.
I killed France once.
It grew a discourteous second head.
I killed it a second time.
It became amphibious.
I said in my purposeful worst French accent
France you are giving me goosebumps.
I killed France 70 times in one day.
A popular avant garde artist
rendered my likeness
from fiberoptics and silicon tubes.

This is what I look like
in the Centre George Pompidou:



Many art students have written
dissertations about death
but I am a small planet with
a large hope for water.

DER SPIEGEL

I am concerned about the fate of the world. Der Spiegel is also concerned about the fate of the world. If leftist terrorists abducted a transit system, people would all agree that Der Spiegel is a vanguard of civilization because Der Spiegel is concerned about the fate of the world. With Der Spiegel it is like a mother bird regurgitating worms or seeds into the mouths of her young. When I am regurgitating in the forest I feel like there is a gruff and severe but secretly compassionate dance instructor watching over me. With titles like "Die Angst Vor Der Angst" Der Spiegel only addresses the big questions. Der Spiegel is the bonfire on a deserted island, the relief of dawn and the relief that I'm still alive in the morning, on an empty beach, naked but for a rosary of coconuts, and a pair of worn-out dance shoes.

TURKEY

You are handling pineapples.
I am comparing bundles of lettuce.
There's an overbearing sense of crowdedness
and I'm drawn closer to you
by the business of strangers.
You look at me and flutter your tongue.
This is the secret way
you communicate with me
I've never understood the meaning of.
We perambulate by the lobster tank.
I can't remember if you said
you long for surf n' turf
or if I fantasized about you saying this.
Either way you say Hell, I'm not threatened by
house-moms.
I spear a cube of jack cheese and begin my pirate act.
You shoot me a look of warning and mouth
the words *not now* but it looks like *hot cow*.
I give an earnest thumbs up
to express my full commitment to the idea.
You order two thirds a pound of turkey.
Later, in the shower, you ask me
if two thirds is enough and I say
Baby, two thirds is perfect.

HAMMOCK

They took my hammock and
they took the accessories
of my hammock,
my hammock pillow,
two hammock nails,
and my hammock hammer.

I used to eat cheese fries in my hammock.

I used to drink ice tea
in my hammock
and watch the trees sway
in the hot wind.

But they drank all the ice tea.

And the cheese fries
had had a good working over, too.

I went to where my hammock
was and gently rocked
in the empty hammock space,
letting the iniquities of life
ease into my psyche
while pigeons pecked breadcrumbs from my afro.

THE FARM HOUSE

is blocking traffic. Susan the dog breeder bursts into the print shop. I've never seen her so radiant. They're finally moving that old house! I photocopy a Polaroid of a boy holding an ice cream cone. Photocopies cost seven cents per page plus tax. The stop lights are lying on their sides exhausted from decades of sparring with cars. Officer Andrews parks his mountain bicycle in the intersection. He hops into a squad car and peels off still wearing his bike helmet. Mr. Peely the math teacher wears a helmet when he jogs. Helmut is a good name for a sturdy child. On the corner in front of the bank that didn't burn people stand around. It's as if the farm house were marching for a social concern. There's Mark in front of his shop with his hand truck. Nat is in the basement with a box of pizza in his lap. The last time traffic was this backed up was when Bill crawled through the intersection like he was looking for a contact lens. But he was just crawling. The farm house turns the corner on to Main Street. Ron with his camera and tripod runs after it. This takes him back to Libya. He remembers how exciting it was, the dust and the smoke. The side door of the farm house swings ajar. A Civil War soldier walks on to the porch. People take pictures with their cell phones. Isn't it sad that after a hundred and fifty years they're moving his house. They murmur. The soldier looks onto the crowd of onlookers. Smiles some sort of melancholy. Scans the faces and doesn't recognize anyone. He nods anyway as though approving an inevitability and goes back inside. Breakfast is on the table. It's that old kind

of cold that everyone feels at some point or another in New England.

IN THE MIDDLE OF A DELTA A FERRY TRAVELS

In the middle of a delta a ferry travels between an island and a peninsula. From the island helicopters take off. They fly in circles, bank, fly off, beyond the peninsula, then return to the island, rest, and fly off again. On the peninsula a boy waits on the bank with the purpose in mind to build a pavilion on the island. He thinks the concept *yonder* but not that word. He thinks *the world is my hammer*. He waits on the peninsula for a day, two, a month, ten years. The sound of helicopters becomes so familiar the boy stops hearing it and instead hears an impossible quietness, endless circling, island birds flapping in the dust. The boy thinks a marriage between the helicopter and the island. He thinks a marriage of endless dust. A marriage where island birds and the whole delta. Where a marriage of the peninsula and the ferry between the impossible quietness. The clod filled bay fills from the island's ledge when the helicopter's relatives come alive. From his pavilion the boy sees the bridesmaids strip out of gun metal dresses, spin in the shallows. They're playing with fluted reeds. Somber villagers bob on rafts in the bay.

THE SON OF JOHNS

Johns is squarish but his son is oblong. Neither are mournful. Neither mock the other. When his son says "door," he means "where is the newspaper?" When Johns says "with a vengeance," he means "I am an impressionable man with an aptitude for euphemizing." If Johns is painting a wooden bird, his son is a Cornish game hen running through the forest. Once Johns was fascinated by scriveners, then his son was captured by stagehands. Johns prefers golfers. His son prefers nomads.

PIRATE RETALIATION

The man removed his penis and a small part of him died. The woman, upon seeing a small part of the man die, allowed a small part of herself die, too. The man said, we are both partially dead, but mostly we are alive, let us rejoice. Yes, the woman concurred, from numerous positions we are mostly alive. The man removed a watermelon from a fishing net and lobbed it over the railing. The woman removed herself from her dress and lobbed herself over the railing. She and the watermelon bobbed in the Indian Ocean like plastic containers filled with emptiness. The man touched the place through the pocket of his cargo shorts. The woman held the watermelon between her breasts and made no sounds. It was a vacation like any other, over-anticipated, poorly-executed, held in suspense by the phrase “pirate retaliation.”

SOMETHING SMALL AND PRECIOUS

There are blossoms; the snow is like blossoms. Two people meet outside a metal museum. One wears a red scarf; one carries an umbrella. One snuffles; one looks into the middling void. The one with the chapped lips has a small horsey. The one with the small breasts dances with ribbons. The one with the small handwriting collects small Russian toys. The one with the hands of a child knows a little something about burglary. The one who assembles the world on the backs of whales exits the story. We live in a cottage with one thousandth of thought. Across the street there is a ~~meatball factory~~ child playing.

TODAY I AM FEELING RADICAL ABOUT HYPOTHETICAL THINGS
WHICH EXIST IN A PARENTHETICAL WAY

I have an urge to do a thing and a bird falls out. Month of buses and
slush, I put my hat on and make an I just put my hat on face to no one.
I pour coffee into my mouth and read a book. I catch a bird in flight
without crushing its wings and look into its eyes and there is “mutual
recognition” or even we “communicate telepathically.” I have you. I
think. You have me. I hold it until it stops shaking. Then I release it
and hold my arm with my hand and my arm is heavy like February.

THE DUFFEL BAG

You climbed inside the duffel bag.
I climbed inside after you
and then we were both inside
the duffel bag, which was bigger
than a big bee hive.
We scoped out the duffel bag
from where we were.
That is, we had found it,
and we said this was it, this
duffel bag. We called
it our home and we hung pictures
on the walls. The pictures sagged
for the walls were saggy
and we swam in the in-ground pool
in the duffel bag,
which was like a rock
we built our cathedral on
in the duffel bag,
smaller than a copse of trees.
The Saints' cemetery
had a little plot in the duffel bag
and white peacocks roosted
in the clerestory
and wandered around the
Lady chapel at day.
We fed them ambrosia salad
from our hands and laughed
not because it tickled.
When the hills caught fire
we breathed the thin arctic lightning.

When the tide went out
we collected sand dollars
and sea cucumbers, which
we laid in the mellifluous belly
of the duffel bag.

3.

THOUGHTS ON HANDS

Someone walks in and she is topless and completely bald not even eyebrows and her eyes are hidden by thick black eyeshadow, so thick her eyes are like two dollops of cream cheese with the centers cut out.

IN ITS VARIANT FORM *HOND* HAND FIRST REFERRED TO A HIRED HAND. THEN FOUR INCHES WERE ASCRIBED TO THE HAND TO MEASURE SHORT DISTANCES OF FALLOW LAND. SOON AFTER CLOCK HANDS APPEARED. THE PLAGUE BEGAN IN 1302. TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIVE YEARS LATER THE PHRASE OUT OF HAND EMERGED TO MEAN CANNOT BE MANAGED.

She is wearing a choker around her neck and there are gemstones over her nipples that catch the light from every angle, bright enough that you can't see her breasts at all. It is like looking at two extraordinary suns.

FOUR YEARS AFTER SHAKESPEARE DIED, A ROUND OF CARDS BECAME A HAND, AND EIGHT YEARS LATER THE CARDS A PLAYER HELD IN HAND BECAME A HAND.

You wouldn't look at her breasts even if her nipples weren't blinding because some recurring idea you have about breasts is not to look at them no matter what.

THE VERB TO HAND FIRST APPEARED MEANING TO SWINDLE.

For instance, if you are walking down a beach and a topless woman is walking toward you and there is no one else on the beach because Spanish people sleep late, what do you do?

IN DICKENSIAN TIME HAND-ME-DOWNS HIT THE SCENE DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE CONSUMERISM UNDER THE PRETEXT OF PHILANTHROPY.

She is getting closer and you could clearly see her breasts if you looked but you won't because not looking at a pair of breasts is a rule you follow almost unerringly.

NO ONE KNOWS WHEN THE SUFFIX Y WAS TACKED ON TO HAND TO DENOTE SOMEONE "GOOD TO HAVE AROUND."

So you look at the sea and there is nothing interesting out there, a few sexless things bobbing in the distance, a darker cloud on the horizon. Any sea is boring when bared breasts come at you like torpedoes.

A HANDS DOWN WIN WAS FIRST REPORTED WHEN A MINOR JOCKEY DROPPED HIS REIGNS BEFORE THE FINISH LINE OF A WINNING HEAT.

She is closer and you must choose something to look at quickly! Some aspect of the landscape to plunge your eyes into!

HANDSOME FIRST MEANT EASY TO HANDLE, READY AT HAND, THEN IT BECAME A SPECIALIZED HORSE DRAWN CARRIAGE.

You don't understand why two breasts are so hard to avoid amid a great expanse of sea and sky and sand.

HAND JOB PRECEDED HAND JIVE AND SOME BELIEVE IT EMERGED SHORTLY BEFORE HANDS OFF. HANDS ON ARRIVED IN 1969, A BIT BELATEDLY SOME BELIEVE.

There is ground directly in front of you. Would looking at the ground appear forced, as though you were deliberately avoiding her breasts? And although there are shapely cliffs to the left, to look at them your gaze would have to conspicuously pass over her.

HENRY VIII COINED THE PHRASE HAND-TO-MOUTH AFTER WATCHING PEASANTS EAT, AND HE ENDORSED PRISONERS' HANDS INDELICATELY REMOVED IN PUNISHMENT OF MINOR FELONIES, SUCH AS THE THEFT OF SHEEP.

She is close enough that she would see your shifty eyes and think you deliberately shifted your gaze to the shapely cliffs as a ruse for your gaze to pass over her breasts.

THE HANDLEBAR OF A BICYCLE WAS BRANDED IN 1887. THE HANDLEBAR OF A MUSTACHE WAS MONIKERED IN 1933.

You must say something because it is polite to acknowledge a passerby when there is no one else around.

IN 1638 THE AREAS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BODY WERE GIVEN HANDS. MICHELANGELO WAS RIGHT-HANDED BUT HE DID EVERYTHING WITH HIS LEFT. MICHELANGELO PAINTED THE HANDS ON THE CREATION OF MAN WITH HIS OFFHAND, THOUGH NO ONE KNEW WHICH ONE THAT WAS.

If you ignore her she will think you are uptight about her breasts. So as she passes you glance at her breasts then at her eyes as if to say I am cool about your breasts and everything. You try to be casual and you say hola which doesn't feel casual at all.

ACTIVISTS AND SALESPEOPLE AND MISSIONARIES AND MATH TEACHERS HAND OUT HANDOUTS, SOME OF WHO KEEP A HANDKERCHIEF IN THEIR BACK POCKET.

She seems to say hola but you do not actually hear her say hola because all she did was murmur and tighten her lips the way a stranger pretends to say hola.

IN 1903 THE TERM PANHANDLE WAS FIRST USED MEANING TO BEG.

She looks behind you as though you were a billboard advertising bras. You did not actually say hola either. You did the same thing she did because you are afraid of human interaction.

IN 1907 THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT MAPPED OUT OKLAHOMA AND CALLED IT A PANHANDLE.

When the woman with the gemstones on her nipples walks in it is clear she is at the wrong holiday party. Everyone else is wearing wool sweaters and wool blazers and you are talking about wools from different countries. You say to the friend of a friend you are talking to that wool is like cheese in respect to many things. You sip eggnog.

OKLAHOMA MEANS "RED PEOPLE" IN CHOCTAW.

She slices into a block of gruyere. Someone changes the track and the Beatles come on.

PORNO ACID

People ask me if I am going out.
I tell them I was in a car accident.
They say we understand and
I feel a strong terror come over me.
I don't know why a standing person
doesn't sit when talking to a sitting person
nor the reverse. Sometimes when a source
of light is eclipsed I think only how perfect
the back of the eclipsing thing must be.
I think of an island, its remoteness,
how it was found not as a result of looking.
Like jumping through a waterfall.
Nude people waving from rocks.

I SWITCHED THE MOON WITH HAM

I wake up with the ham shining
through the window on my face.
Window panes cast intersecting shadows
on my astronaut sheets.
The steady plip of the bath tap
undulates in my upside ear and a cat mews.
A vague desire for the ham's mystical properties
fills me with pride and angst
I mistakenly attribute
to the turmoil existence defines for me.
I was born on a full ham.
Mother called me her little ham child.
When the ham turns the oceans mad
I feel my head open, a kind of phalanx
of moth escape my brain and be sucked
up through the shaft of ham light.
It is part of me that is pulled toward the ham.
It is not pleasant to think of moths on ham.
It is like maggots clinging
to a malodorous slab of oneiric meat.
But that is where these moths come from
and where they must return to.

THE OTHER INTELLIGENTSIA

There was this intelligentsia that was in love with another intelligentsia, but the other intelligentsia was not in love with this intelligentsia, it was in love with another intelligentsia. The first intelligentsia loved that it loved the second intelligentsia and that the second intelligentsia did not love it back but loved another intelligentsia, a third intelligentsia. The second intelligentsia loved that it was loved by the first intelligentsia and that it did not love it back, and that it loved another intelligentsia. The third intelligentsia, which was loved by the second intelligentsia, did not love either intelligentsias. It was, of the three, the coldest intelligentsia. The first intelligentsia would meet in a dark corner and philosophically consider the situation of loving but not being loved. The second intelligentsia would meet in another dark corner and philosophically consider the situation of being loved but not being in love. The third intelligentsia, which loved only abstract propositions and sound reasoning, would lie around on beach towels and whisper *intelligentsia, intelligentsia*.

DEER

Deer do not
know much
about being many.
They are all just
this one deer
lucklessly bounding
through the woods
like an unbroken
continuum
who knows
how to tamp down grass.

POEM

I saw a lady cop pointing her gun
the way movie stars point a gun.
Later, I found a shiny packet of shark bites
in a bowl in the living room.

The fire escape at night is my favorite place to be.
I awoke in the middle of the night
feeling sick so I puked little sharks onto the fire escape.

Flinging open the window sounds nice, but in reality you'll just pull a muscle.

On the fire escape I heard distant voices
and at that moment they somehow corresponded
with how seasons can change so abruptly.
Leaves changing is just them dying.

Multi tasking with my ears,
I had one ear bud in my ear
and the other hanging limp near my navel.

What has more intrinsic value to you,
a fruit stand or kebab stand?

In the sink, *foodstuff* cluttered
in the drain and on the basin's sides beyond where the water hits.
Fifty-year-old men on the roof spackled fifty-year-old tarmac.
One of them told a joke about a flamingo but I missed the punchline.

The nearing of the end of a poem is a relief for the reader
but an absolute terror for the poet.

I'll keep it going a little longer.

I'll write forward, forward, back
as though I were an angry stick bug being stalked by a cat
on the rim of a compost bin.

The neighbors were humping again.

I thought of the scene in Mr. Hulot's Holiday
where he sets off fireworks
inside a little shack on the beach.